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ABC Update

BY RALPH S. BOWIE

Jeffrey Norman, ABC-Certified Specialist, Takes W.D. La. Bench

American Board of Certification (ABC)-certified specialist **Jeffrey P. Norman** was sworn in as bankruptcy judge for the Western District of Louisiana, Shreveport Division, on Aug. 5, 2014, and will share part of the caseload for the Monroe Division. For three years prior to his appointment, he was a chapter 13 trustee in Columbus, Ohio, and before his trusteeship, he was a partner with Gipson and Norman in Houston, practicing solely in bankruptcy law. Judge Norman is board certified in Consumer Bankruptcy Law by both the ABC and the Texas Board of Legal Specialization.

Judge Norman immigrated to the U.S. from England in 1966 and was sworn in as a naturalized American citizen in 1983. After graduating from Clear Lake High School in Houston, he received his B.S. in accounting and finance from Houston Baptist University in 1982 and his J.D. from South Texas College of Law in 1985.

Beginning in 1987, Judge Norman and his partner and associates maintained Gipson and Norman, a law practice that was devoted exclusively to bankruptcy matters. Judge Norman represented consumer and business debtors and, occasionally, creditors in all aspects of bankruptcy. He successfully handled complex business chapter 11 cases, including oil-and-gas service companies, maritime-shipping companies, restaurants, high-net-worth individuals, video-production companies, and an offshore diving and salvaging company, and represented farmers, ranchers and fishermen in chapter 12 cases. Judge Norman was privileged to work with his partner, Ronald Gipson, until his unexpected death in 2008.

Judge Norman personally filed more than 8,000 bankruptcy cases from 1987-2011. While in private practice, he was named a "Superlawyer" by *Texas Monthly* in bankruptcy on multiple occasions and

was AV-rated pre-eminent by Martindale-Hubbell. He lectured extensively on consumer bankruptcy and was published by the State Bar Press in 2010.



Hon. Jeffrey P. Norman

On May 19, 2011, he was appointed a standing chapter 13 trustee in the Southern District of Ohio, Eastern Division, and served for three years. Judge Norman was the founding trustee of the downtown Columbus, Ohio, office, which he considers some of his finest work. Within a four-month period, he was responsible for all aspects of opening the new office, including hiring a 20-person staff, drafting office policy and procedures, and implementing the transfer of 3,500 cases.

Judge Norman has practiced before 10 bankruptcy judges and believes that he has learned from them all. "I think as a lawyer you see the good in what a judge does and try to implement that into your courtroom demeanor. I have to say [that] I now have a new appreciation for a judge's work, given my short time on the bench. I look back on how I practiced law before I became a judge in a different perspective. I am much more aware of the administrative tasks that a judge performs and how the lawyers in front of the court can be of assistance to the court."

"I wasn't born in Texas, but I got there as quick as I could" is a quote from Sam Houston, the first president of the Republic of Texas. Like Sam Houston, Judge Norman was not born in Texas, but he considered himself a lifelong Texan until his move to Columbus. He is happy to be back in the south and the Southeastern Conference. An ardent Texas A&M fan, he looks forward to his drives to College Station, Texas, for football games and expects the annual Louisiana State University and

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Texas A&M football game on Thanksgiving Day to be one of the highlights of the season. Judge Norman left many great friends in Columbus and sheepishly admits that he is now also an Ohio State fan. “I would never admit it while I lived in Columbus, but my second-favorite college team is now the Ohio Buckeyes,” Judge Norman said. “My friends and I have promised that if Texas A&M and The Ohio State University are ever in a bowl game, we will all be present and have a great party.”

Judge Norman feels very fortunate to have become a judge. “As an immigrant, I have lived the American dream and have become a bankruptcy judge. My parents immigrated to the United States with my brother and me, six suitcases, and the promise of a job that paid my dad \$4 an hour. My only regret is that my mother, who died last year, did not get to see me take the bench. She would have been so proud.”

Judge Norman has been happily married to his wife, Elizabeth, since 1987 and has two college-age children. They are currently looking forward to moving into their new home in Shreveport. **abi**

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